

The Ballarat Naturalist

JUNE 2009



CLARKESDALE EXCURSION, SUNDAY 3 MAY 2009
LEADER: JOHN GREGURKE



Eight field naturalists left Ballarat in thick fog which lifted by the time we reached Smythesdale. The remainder of the morning was sunny and calm.

The morning was spent at Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary, owned by Bird Observation & Conservation Australia and covering a total area of 535 hectares. We walked along the creek through the bird paddock. Long standing members recalled the working bees held during the 1970's to remove gorse from the creek line and plant a variety of bird attracting trees and shrubs. The area is now a dense thicket of plants. We noticed grevillea, hakea, banksia and acacia species flowering.

Despite the ideal weather, birds were hard to find. The large dam only contained a small pool of water but no water birds. Crested Shrike-tit and White-eared Honeyeater were found but thornbills were elusive as were White-naped Honeyeaters that Ken said were always here. Along the Ballarat-Skipton rail trail we found Box Mistletoe flowering and attracting Eastern Spinebill and New Holland Honeyeater. One Parsons Band was found in flower and many Nodding Greenhood orchid leaves had appeared after the Anzac weekend rain.



We ate lunch on the veranda of the nearly completed Clare Miller Environment Centre. We watched Australasian Grebe diving in the dam and Superb Fairy-Wren flitting around the wetland vegetation.

After lunch we visited Piggoreet Water Reserve which holds a pool of water in a hole where mud has recently been removed. We pulled out many African Boneseed plants in the surrounding bush, no doubt these have spread from the weed infestation at Devil's Kitchen.

Our last stop was at Bushranger's Reserve that had been control burnt in April. The fire had burnt out dead stumps leaving empty holes. What has happened to the reptiles and mammals that may have previously inhabited this niche? Trees with hollows also caught alight and many have toppled. Before

leaving for home we had excellent views of 2 male and a female Scarlet Robin, one male even sat on the bitumen road where it was much easier to see than when perched in a tree and obscured by leaves.

Bird list compiled by Ken Hammond : 26 species

Australasian Grebe	Common Bronzewing	Masked Lapwing
Long-billed Corella	Crimson Rosella	Laughing Kookaburra
White-throated Treecreep- er	Superb Fairy-wren	White-browed Scrubwren
Buff-rumped Thornbill	Striated Pardalote	Eastern Spinebill
White-eared Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird	New Holland Honeyeater
Crested Shrike-tit	Grey Shrike-thrush	Australian Magpie
Grey Currawong	Grey Fantail	Australian Raven
White-winged Chough	Scarlet Robin	Eastern Yellow Robin
Welcome Swallow	European Goldfinch.	

WATTLES OF BALLARAT PRESS RELEASE

The following is the press release for our new publication:

The Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat is proud to announce the publication of *Wattles of Ballarat*, to be launched by Australian Natural History Medalion recipient Ern Perkins OAM. The book will be launched at the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat meeting on Friday 3 July at 8pm in the Ballarat Horticulture Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Streets, Ballarat.

The idea for the book was developed by the late Patricia Murphy, member of Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat and sister of Ern. For many years Pat and her husband Bill Murphy had been quietly and methodically researching, seeking, documenting and identifying our district *Acacia* species.

Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat decided to complete Pat's project. Members completed the photography and finalised the text which covers twenty-one wattles occurring naturally within 40 km of Ballarat and three which have been introduced and spread into local bushland.

Wattles are an integral part of the Australian landscape, their bright yellow flowers instantly recognisable in the bush. *Wattles of Ballarat* will help you identify the local species. Several local species make ideal garden specimens.

The book is available from local book shops and Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat, PO Box W328, Ballarat West, 3350. Inquiries to the secretary

From Roger Thomas' Nature Notes The Courier Feb 13th 2009

NEST BUILDERS SHOW THEIR SKILL

Magpies have been known to use wire when making their nests, but most nest building material is natural. Sticks, twigs, grass stems and spider web are commonly used. Manmade materials sometimes used in nests include pieces of cloth, string, coloured wool and baling twine

Baling twine (hay band) is not uncommon in the larger nests of magpies but a report of a honeyeater using this material is most unusual. The bird involved was a yellow faced honeyeater and this enterprising bird used the finest threads of twine that she could gather. The Smeaton observer stated "The birds have used strands of orange hay- band as the major structural component for the nest. This material is invariably difficult to fashion at will and I am amazed at the skill with which these birds have threaded multiple strands around twigs and branches for basic support and extended the lattice downwards to form the main frame for the pendant cradle itself. At strategic places these synthetic "cables" were lashed to their anchor point with spiders web and that the nest chamber itself consisted of the usual soft materials for warmth and comfort. Now that the chicks have left, the nest has retracted to about one third of the size it was while they were in residence suggesting that an expansion/accommodation factor was built into the original plan"

Val Hocking

MONITORING CHANGE IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Suggestions for 20 metre square quadrats

Prepared By Ern Perkins, May 2009

Desirable equipment.

4 pegs (for corners)

hammer

80m rope or ribbon for boundary

4 x 20 m rope or ribbon for lane markers.

notebook or clipboard and paper or plant list

compass (to align boundaries)

gps

camera

a 30 metre tape measure is useful.

Method

- 1 **North West Corner.** Select the north-west corner. A distinctive rock outcrop, a distinctive tree (preferably sound at the base, so that it will not readily be burnt out), or some other landmark. If a GPS is not available, indicate the position by distance from some landmark. It is important that the quadrat can found for further surveys.
- 2 **Quadrat Boundaries.** Put in the NW corner peg, and align the base line magnetic south. Put in the SW peg, and align the south boundary. If in doubt, measure the diagonal – it should be 28.28m for a right angle. If this angle is correct, the other angles will also be square. Continue with the other sides.
- 3 **Give the quadrat a number** e.g. xfnc1
- 4 **List the species present** in the quadrat. Appoint a recorder. The others call the species as they see them. Continue until it seems that all species present have been recorded. Do not include dead perennials, but include dead annuals and seasonal plants (e.g. plants which grow from an underground storage) that have died off..
- 5 **Estimate the abundance and cover.** The scale is:
 - + less than 5% (20 sq m) cover. Few individuals,
 - 1 less than 5% (20 sq m) cover. Many individuals.
 - 2 5% - 25% cover, any number of individuals
 - 3 25% - 50% cover, any number of individuals
 - 4 50% - 75% cover, any number of individuals
 - 5 75% - 100% cover, any number of individuals.Few/many is undefined. Suggest that “few” is less than 5-10, depending on the size of the species. If the plant can only be identified to genus level, show this e.g. Pimelea sp. If it is not possible to identify a species, show as shrub1, herb1, grass1, etc. Note that the total cover could be well above 100%, if there is dense tree, shrub and ground cover.
- 6 **Count individuals.** Put out the lane marking tape/ropes, running N-S. 4m wide

lanes are a good size for two people. Keep a separate total for each lane. For species that can readily be counted, count the number of individuals. [We count the number of stems arising separately from the ground, even if we suspect that they are joined below ground. For ground covers, we count clumps.] Do not include species if the trunk/stem is outside the quadrat, even if the foliage is in. If a species is too numerous to count, estimate the number. Count separately juveniles (not yet flowered or set seed), and dead plants. So a count could be 6j + 23 + 14d

- 7 **Recording.** Record quadrat number, names of those conducting the survey, co-ordinates of the NW corner, date, location of the quadrat, the slope, the type of vegetation (e.g. box-ironbark forest), description of the NW corner, and information about the quadrat e.g. amount of leaf and twig litter, rock outcrops, mining relics etc, comments on the plants, insects etc. Include burn history if known, or comment on evidence of fire.
- 8 **Photographs.** First photo should be of the quadrat number and date. I photograph the page of the notebook.
Second photo should be the NW corner. Suggest also photos from the NW corner; a view to the south, to the south-east and to the east, always in this order. Photograph the sky/canopy from the centre of the quadrat. [use time delay]. Other photographs may be taken. If possible, steady the camera by using a tree trunk.
- 9 **Notes on use of a GPS.** There are two common co-ordinate systems in use. AGD66 (for Australian Geographic Datum 1966) is the older system, and was used for the 25,000 and 100,000 maps. GDA (for Geographic Datum Australia) has superseded AGD66. There is about 200m difference in NS and EW directions. The datum used should always be included with the co-ordinates. Most GPS units allow you to select the datum. You should also allow the GPS to “settle down”. If the accuracy of the reading is given, aim for an accuracy of at less than 10 metre, and preferably 5 metres.
- 10 **Labelling.** Using a graphics program, add the quadrat number and the date to each photo. [I also add direction of view, co-ordinates (including gda) and my initials.]

This method will be used on the Mid-month excursion to the Creswick Forest. Come along and see how it works!

BOOK LAUNCH
Wattles of Ballarat
Friday 3rd July
Club meeting at 7.30pm
Book Launch at 8.00pm by Ern Perkins OAM
Speaker - Tony Wilson - BEN Chairman
- Nature Photography
Supper

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc
A0014919P ABN 13150 403 135
Minutes of General Meeting 1 May 2008

Opening and Apologies

The President, Peter Dalman welcomed 17 members & visitors.

Apologies were received from 10 members

Accepted on the motion of Peter Billing; seconded Ken Hammond.

Minutes of previous meeting Tabled and Summarised in Ballarat Naturalist.

Confirmed on the motion of Carol Hall; seconded Nina Netherway

Correspondence

IN:

- FNCV: Victorian Naturalist, April 2009; Field Nats News, May 2009.
- Geelong FNC: Geelong Naturalist, April 2009.
- Bendigo FNC: Whirrakee, April 2009.
- Bush Heritage Australia: Bush Heritage News, Autumn 2009.
- RHSV: 160th birthday, Saturday 20 June 2009.
- Jenny Johnson / Margaret Thomas/ Margaret Rotheram: subscription and postage.
- Bendigo Bank: Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc Seana Inc Camp A/c cheq. book; Statement.
- People for a living Moorabool: Lecture at Moorabool Lodge, 2.00-4.30pm Sun 24 May

OUT:- nil

Inwards correspondence received on the motion of Dulcie Brooke; seconded Helen Young-Harvey.

Reports

- *Treasurer's Report:* Opening Balance \$5396.63, Income: \$339.00; Expenses: \$158.75; Closing Balance: \$5576.88. *Received on the motion of Peter Dalman; seconded Greg Binns.*
- *BEN Workshop: Celebrating a Future*, Sunday 5 April. John Gregurke reported that 25 people listed the achievements of BEN, and then identified future needs. Working groups were formed (self-promotion, finance, community education, planning documents, linking with aligned groups) to report back after one month.
- *Wattles of Ballarat.* Information taken to Waller & Chester, page layout and cover designed, book to be delivered by July; pages returned for final check. Launch at Club meeting on 3 July by Ern Perkins.
- *Cave Hill Creek nature trail:* 4 people attended excursion and surveyed the nature trail. Carol Hall and Greg Binns will prepare draft notes.

General Business

FNCB Camp: Star of the Sea Convent, Apollo Bay, 22-26 June. Those attending to sign up at next meeting.

Show and Tell

Helen Burgess: Program of trip to Macquarie Island and Antarctica beginning on Travel Oz on Wednesday 10 June.

Field Reports

- John Gregurke: Box Mistletoe flowering on Yellow Box and Candlebark at Clarksdale. Eastern Spinebill and New Holland Honeyeater feeding in mistletoe.
- Carol Hall: Flocks of Pelican seen at Cooper's Creek and channel country.
- Tony Johns: At Colignan and Hattah-Kulkyne NP – Blue-faced and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Emu, butcher bird and quail.
- Ken Hammond: 7 Striated Thornbill in Wendouree garden.
- Peter Billing: Kangaroos drinking in Murray River at Colignan. Murray Cod, Golden Perch, Bream and Carp caught.
- Greg Binns: Small Grass-tree, Flax-lily and mosses regenerating at Surface Hill, Smythesdale after burn in 2008. Ferns and club moss not visible.
- Gavin Cerini: Collared Sparrowhawk killed blackbird in Eyre St garden. 50+ Chestnut Teal at Eastern and Western beach Geelong.
- Dulcie Brooke: Slim-browed Albatross taking off from water in Beagle Channel, South America.

Excursion

Sunday 3 May, meet at Ballarat Horticulture Centre to leave at 9.30am for Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary, Sprindallah Water Reserve and Bushrangers Reserve. Leader: John Gregurke.

Mid month excursion, Thursday 21 May, leaving at 9.00am to trial nature trail notes at Cave Hill Creek.

Syllabus Item

Stafford McKnight, University of Ballarat, spoke on "Mineralogy of Gold". Greg Binns thanked Stafford for his talk.

Supper

ANT IDENTIFICATION COURSE FOR ANT SPECIES MYMECIA 17.

Saturday June 13th from 10am to 2pm with short lunch break.

Melton Shire Council and Melton Environment Group are conducting a training course in identification of this rare ant on Saturday June 13th which will be led by John Wainer, an ant expert from the Department of Primary Industry. The course will be held in the field at Harness Road Gilgai Woodland and another site.

There will be a maximum of 20 participants on the course. Melton Shire Council and the Werribee Catchment Management Authority are contributing over half of the course costs. The cost to participants will depend on the numbers attending but will be no more than \$30 each (if we have 10 participants) and will decrease if there are more interested people. You will need to pay a deposit on booking.

Contact Linda Bradburn, Environmental Education Officer, Melton Shire Council

CALENDAR 2009

JUNE

- Fri 5 Members' Night - *Three special presentations.*
- Sun 7 **Excursion** *BEN Reserves* - Leader John Gregurke
- Sat 13 Ant Identification Course for ant species *Mymecia* 17.
- Thur 18 **Mid-Month Excursion** - Monitoring change in the environment
along the Great Dividing Trail in the Creswick Forest.
Meet at 9.30am at the Horticultural Centre
- Tues 23 **Committee Meeting** at 10a Ferguson Crt

JULY

- Fri 3 **Launch of our Wattle Book.**
Nature Photography, Tony Wilson, BEN Chairman (see p.3)
- Sun 5 **Excursion** - Significant trees - Dr Fran Hanrahan
- Mon 13 - Fri 17 **Club Camp to Apollo Bay**

NOTE: Change of dates and venue for Club Camp
Apollo Bay, Monday 13 July to Friday 17 July,
at Christian Brothers accommodation, Nelson Street - overlooking the bay!
Cost - \$20 per night

Committee

President.....	Mr Peter Dalman
Vice-President.....	Mr Greg Binns
Secretary	Mr John Gregurke
Treasurer	Mr Les Hanrahan
Miss Helen Burgess	Mrs Claire Dalman
Mrs Carol Hall	Mrs Val Hocking
Mr John Morrish	Dr Frances Hanrahan
Ms Nina Netherway (editor)	

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email: Secretary:-John Gregurke, Editor: Nina Netherway,

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au Click on *Community>Local Clubs> Environment*

Meetings are held at Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Ballarat Horticultural Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.

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